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Freedom's Call

'You, my friends, were called to be free men ; only do not turn your freedom into licence for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love'. Galatians 5 : 13.

Thirty-three years ago on the 15th of August, 1947, India became independent. The nation became free from foreign rule on that day to shape its own destiny and work for it. It is but right and proper that we should celebrate the Independence Day with flag hoisting and singing of the National Anthem and illuminations and all the other ceremonies which are considered to be symbols of our patriotism and national solidarity. But these celebrations and ceremonial expressions of our love for the country would be meaningless and incomplete if they do not evoke in us a sense of gratitude and open our eyes and ears to the vision and call of freedom.

The celebration of independence should call us to participate with our fellow citizens in an act of thanksgiving to God. First of all we must thank God for the previous gift of national freedom, the fruit of the sacrifice of thousands of men and women who fought and suffered, (some even death), for the cause of national independence. We should render thanks to God especially for the unique way in which we have got our independence. The revolution which brought freedom to our motherland is a unique one in the history of the world. It is unique in the sense that it transformed the destiny of many millions of men and women with little blood shed and violence. It marks the triumph of not one brute over another, but of the spirit of freedom and humanity over the blinding greed of imperialism.

This spiritual and human dimension of our freedom struggle should lead us to realise that the freedom we have gained through the sweat and blood of countless patriots is not meant to be used by a few rulers and leaders and other dominant groups for the fulfilment of the selfish desires and ambitions of their 'lower nature', but to serve the people and create opportunities for them to enjoy freedom and realise their God-given human dignity. On the first Independence Day, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, calling the people of India to a life of service, said: 'The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance, and disease and inequality of opportunity'.

Though independent India has several laudable achievements to her credit in terms of political stability and parliamentary democracy, the vision of a New India free from exploitation and degrading poverty and ignorance still remains a distant dream to millions of our countrymen after thirty-three years of independence. Even in the political arena the uprising in Assam together with regional and linguistic chauvinism often

witnessed in other parts of the country casts a shadow over our emotional integration and national solidarity. The indignities and sufferings inflicted on Harijans and suspicious treatment meted out to certain minority communities make mockery of our profession of a casteless and secular society. The increasing militancy among organised workers and students who often indulge in violent agitations, strikes, bandhs and gheraos is a standing repudiation of the Father of the Nation and his gospel of non-violence.

Much of the present malaise is due to the ever widening credibility gap between the people and our leaders who have failed to identify themselves with the poverty-stricken masses and their aspirations. Mahatma Gandhi was able to rouse the conscience of his followers against the evils of untouchability, caste, poverty and illiteracy because his simple life based on commitment to truth and non-violence was very close to the poor people in Indian villages. He took to a life-style of utter simplicity and self-denial in order to express his solidarity with the poor and participate authentically in their struggle for socio-economic liberation. He said: 'The first thing to cultivate is the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next thing is to arrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality.' In contrast to this, most of us who claim to be working for the liberation of the poor from socio-economic oppression practice a life-style which does not even remotely resemble that of the common man. Unless we identify ourselves with the poor villagers and see 'how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bathe, and wash their clothes and pots, and in which their cattle drink and roll' we will not be able to represent the masses and will not respond to our call. So freedom calls us to go to villages and stand with the villagers in their struggle for justice. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: 'The village work frightens us, we who are town-bred find it trying to take to village life. Our bodies in many cases do not respond to the hard life. But this is a difficulty we have to face boldly, even heroically, if the desire is to establish swaraj for the masses. The only requirement is to sit down in their midst and work away in steadfast faith, as their scavengers, their nurses, their servants, not as their patrons.' This is the call of freedom to us even today. What is our response?



Indianisation of the Indian Church and the Indian Christians

This is not a new topic. This has been discussed at length and in depth for over several years. In fact Bishop Azariah has dwelt on the subject over fifty years ago and has been experimenting with certain innovations. The subject has also become relevant in the new popular cry for 'Be Indian, Buy Indian'. The slogan became the subject matter of a sermon by Rev. Murdoch Mackenzie at the St. Andrews Church, Egmore before he left India. However, now that the thinking on the subject is percolating into the lower levels, in the Diocesan level and the Congregational level, the subject has become more controversial and has given rise to a lively discussion. The position taken by many is based more on fears and prejudices than on a proper appreciation of the realities of life and the historical context in which we are living and the basis of the Christian faith which should instruct us in matters of this nature.

In the first place, as the primary responsibility of every Christian to bear Witness, we should recognise and realise how the other thinking people are looking at the Indian Christian community as such. Although one may not fully agree with what the renowned writer Mr. Nirad C. Chaudhuri comments in his book 'The Continent of Circe', one cannot but see certain force and historical perspective in his comments on Indian Christian culture etc. The author classifies the Ethnic elements created by the European expansion in India into two broad classes—the genetic half-castes and the cultural. He groups in the first group, the communities in which there is an actual intermixture of European and pre-existing blood, mostly Hindu. In the second, according to him, is comprised the converts to Christianity.* He then goes on to describe how the half-caste culture of the Indian Christians is a weak source. According to him, these half-castes are not possessors of a composite culture. They are not natural and healthy hybrids culturally, but are people who have given up their old culture without being able to adopt a new culture except in a weak and debased form. He then describes how the Indian Christians are demeaning and more subservient than the Hindus and mentions.

'The Indian Christians differ from the Hindus in this that though the latter admit the power of their fellow Hindu rulers and would do nothing to incur their displeasure, privately they do not see much virtue in the leaders. The Christians, on the other hand, give the impression of believing sincerely that the Hindu ministers cannot be very different from the archangels standing by the side of God.'

This of course explains the attitude of most of the Indian Christians to the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The learned author continues to remark,

* The author has excluded the Syrian Christians from this group.

'The great majority of the Indian Christians live their etiolated life in the shade and no sun invigorates them. There is something diffident and even pitiable dependent about them. I notice this in any large gathering of Indian Christians. They do not seem to be at ease. One might say that all of them are sitting timidly on the edge of the chair in the Hindu living room.....'. 'But among the Indian Christians themselves there was a good deal of difference in outlook and status due to their former position in the Hindu Society. This can be said to be particularly true of the best Christian families in Calcutta. They were and remain indistinguishable from other Bengalis of the same education and position. They never were very enthusiastic about going over to a foreign style of living and preferring to live like Bengali gentlemen which they were.....'

The author is not without his caustic comments on the Anglicised Hindus. He considers that from among the Anglicised Hindus, firstly, the Officers of the armed forces and secondly, the Bureaucratic, Managerial and Professional elite, among others, formed an important section. Of course the author's concern about the Indian Anglicisation is not new, because even as early as 1931, when the British Government set up a Military College Committee to establish a Military Academy in India, he sent a letter to the Committee suggesting the type of people they should recruit and the type of education they should impart, because he even then believed that 'the ideal of an imitation Englishman will never attract the best manhood of India'. The result of the misconceived training given to these Indian Army officers is, according to him, 'The gelding knife has been applied at the wrong place and as agents of Westernisation, these men are effigies for show, they could not be more ineffectual if they were at Madame Tussaud's. Their Anglicism is artificial, one might even say counterfeit..... Their whole way of life is a drilled habit, a matter of spit and polish, perhaps the strongest emotion for anything Western that they feel for what they call "Scotch"'.

About the other class of Anglicised Hindus, namely the Bureaucratic, Managerial and Professional elite, he says,

'Their reaction to Western influences has become a routine affair and the influences themselves have ceased to be stimulating. On the other hand, each succeeding generation, the men themselves becoming more and more enfeebled and less and less absorbent. It would seem that their saturation point was reached long ago. So they are now something like leached soil for the growth of continuous Western crops and in strength of character, varying the metaphor, one might describe them as wine which is very much "maderise"'.

'Indeed, there are perhaps few people on our pullulating Mother Earth of today who hold a higher opinion of themselves, of their own intelligence, knowledge and culture. When these Hindus cannot treat a particular individual rudely for any reason but find him holding opinions opposed to theirs, they sport an oily smile which is more maddening than any outright discourtesy could be. They are pontifical and unshakable in their assumption of omniscience.

'With exceptions which only prove the rule, it is a general experience to find all Anglicised Hindus behaving thus towards persons whom they do not look upon as equals. If girls of this class are even shopgirls and in some of the stores run by the Government they are employed as such for the benefit of foreigners, they give airs as if they were conferring favours by selling their goods to ordinary Indian customers. If they are receptionists they practice quizzing on visitors who in their eye are not of the received standard.

'Even foreign diplomats complain of the rudeness of the officials and other high-placed Indians in correspondence as well as conversation. All these men combine the Hindu pride of caste with the English pride of class and they can be very unpleasant'.

From the above one should not conclude that the author is an obscurantist wanting the country to revert back to the ancient order. What he advocates is creation of a modern Indian culture, to fuse the best in India with the best in the West. According to him, 'The new culture which was created in India under the impact of the West was the work of the Hindus and mostly by Bengali Hindus'. He goes on to say, 'The half-caste communities knew nothing about Hindu culture, perhaps not much more about the Western culture and they took no interest whatever in the new culture after it had been created. They remained wholly outside the pale of all cultural activities and they still remain there'.

It is in this context we should see whether or not the Indian Christians should enter the new stream of the modern culture by becoming more Indian and get deep-rooted in Indian culture before being able to imbibe the best of the Western culture. It should be remembered that the Christians all over the world are facing this problem in some form or the other and are concerned about it. According to Dr. Kazoh Kitamori, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Union Theological Seminary in Tokyo, Christian theology should be related much more fully to Asian systems of thought and culture. He says that at the moment the Japanese Church is 'more like a telegraph-pole than a tree' and, in his thinking, needs to get its roots down.

A recent visitor from overseas, after working with the Church of North India for a while, has commented as follows about Church service in India:

'The hymns are either translations of the dreary old things we have been singing for years or, worse still, the dreary old things themselves. Even the new CNI Service reads to me like a pale imitation of the Church of England's Series 3 service. The order is the same, the words are the same and it derives nothing at all from the great Indian cultural tradition. Series 3

was created for less formal, more mobile English occasions. Where is the Indian liveliness and the local music? Is it not possible to introduce lights and flowers liturgically into the service? Can congregation members not write hymns which express how they feel now? Indian culture is so very rich, it seems a shame that there should be very little of it in the churches. What better time for teaching about the light that shines on in the darkness, or the true light that was to come into the world than Diwali? What better time to talk of Jesus' conquest of death and evil than Dussehra?

The liturgy of a church has to grow out of the church's own culture. So the missionaries who came to Britain in the sixth and seventh centuries came to terms with the Saxon culture they met on their arrival. The Ule Feast became Christmas, the fertility dance at Eostre became Easter and the sacred and imperishable message of the salvation of Christ sped across the country. Perhaps the church here could organise a liturgical conference and see what grew out of it.....'

Even within India, the acknowledged Indian Christian leaders have always worked for a modern Indian culture and have taken steps to get the Indian worship and Indian churches to arise from and out of the Indian culture. Bishop Azariah in his pioneering work in Dornakal has raised a church based on Indian style, blending of the Hindu and Muslim architectural building tradition. Another great leader of recent times, Dr. D. G. Moses, formerly Principal, Hislop College, Nagpur, and also who served as Vice-President of the World Council of Churches, made the following comment:

'For instance, one image which we have given to them is that we are an exotic product, a foreign, western institution with nothing of the soil and the land to which we belong. In this image of us they have not been wrong. Except for the land on which our churches are built, everything else has been foreign and western. Our architecture very often has been foreign, our music has been borrowed, our ways of worship have not been indigenous. Altogether, innumerable churches in the cities and villages in our country have been pale imitations of the Methodist or Presbyterian or Episcopal Churches. We must recognise that conditions are changing and at least in our music we are using more of Indian lyrics and Bhajans. The rich and beautiful dances of India we have left untouched except in what we might call a symbolic way. We have not taken the treasures of Indian music, Indian art and Indian dancing and put them at the feet of our Master and made them praise the Lord of the Church.'

The attempt to worship Jesus Christ according to the local culture is a universal problem. *The Time* magazine dated 12-5-1980 reports as follows:

'Catholics in Zaire are also "Africanising" the liturgy in ways marked by high church attendance and great zeal. At a typical Mass the young priest dons a zebra's mane head-dress while assistants, men and women alike clap and shuffle around the altar to the throbbing of drums and an occasional shrill scream of religious ecstasy. The congregation swings, signs lustily and sways with the rhythms. "The Latin rite is too impersonal for Africans", the priest explains. "The Zaireans" Mass comes from the heart.'

However, one has to keep in mind that one has to make a cautious approach to the problem. Mr. Nirad C. Chaudhuri himself has cautioned us as follows :

‘Behaviour is a more important part of religion for Hindus and unless one resisted Hindu behaviour at the outset, the Hindu camel was likely to usurp the whole Christian tent before anybody could do anything about it.....Already there is among all classes of Indian Christians, especially those of good position, a greater readiness to take part in Hindu festivals like the Holi and Diwali than is safe for them. The Christians sprinkle colour, smear red powder and explode fire works like the Hindu. This they usually justify on the plea that these are nothing but social customs. They do not know the fact to which I have just referred to that the most insidious side of Hinduism is the social. A Hindu sets greater store by Hindu social behaviour than by any Hindu belief of dogma.....Even in the worst days of Roman persecutions Christianity was not faced with such a prospect as that which faces it today in India. Hindu tolerance is not a thing which lends dignity to what it tolerates. Therefore, thinking of the past of that religion I wish for a persecuting Caesar in India, so that its followers might be challenged to save themselves.’

To sum up, it would appear that in our own interest the Indian Christian community cannot continue to follow the half-caste culture, but get themselves embedded in the Indian value system keeping themselves open to the influence of wholesome culture from any

other quarter so that the culture in which they thrive may be indeed a modern culture. In order to do the Indian Church should develop their own tradition of worship against the background of Indian music. Perhaps, in order to do so, the churches that cater to the elite class and the urban class may have to anglicise themselves and become genuinely part of Indian Church, thus sharing the traditions of the rural churches in India which certainly remain Indian.

One has to be authentic to be cultured; imitative is no art; similarly imitation cannot provide the basis for any culture. To be imitative in real life is to be ridiculous. Let us be genuine; let us be what we are. Thus ‘Be Indian’ is no empty slogan. It calls for one’s self-hood and one’s own identity.

So far we have studied the subject from a sociological point of view. How does the Christian faith instruct in the matter?

Central to the Christian faith is the doctrine of Incarnation of God in Christ in a historical, geographical and cultural context. Yet He is eternal and universal. If so He has to be conceived in each geographical and cultural context and contemporary situation. To fix Him up in one style amounts to idolatry; to fix Him up in a particular pattern is to limit Him, is not to know Him. How can one offer one’s service and worship to Him if one fails to know Him?

E. D. DEVADASO

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The Protestant Church in Malabar: the Erosion of its Credibility

The Protestant Church in Malabar was founded in the nineteenth century by missionaries of the Basel Evangelical Mission. The first batch of two missionaries from Basel landed on this coast in 1834. In those days it was extremely difficult for a Hindu in Malabar to become a convert to Christianity because any member of the Hindu community who embraced Christianity was automatically cut off from all social and commercial intercourse with other members, both of his family and of his community. Yet the early missionaries were able to attract converts to the Christian fold, and succeeded in establishing Christian congregations at different centres in Malabar. My ancestors were some of those who received baptism in early days. By 1914, when the First World War broke out, the British Government declared the Basel Mission in Malabar to be a German organization, and interned the German missionaries, the church they founded in Malabar had made considerable progress towards self-government and self-support.

The action taken by the British Government against the Basel Mission no doubt deprived the Malabar Church of the spiritual guidance and financial support the Basel Mission had generously supplied for three quarters of a century. But other missionary societies and Churches came to the rescue. And in spite of severe financial difficulties and internal dissensions, the over-ruling hand of God has guided the Malabar Church through the succeeding years. In 1919 the representatives of the Malabar Church met and adopted a new constitution investing the government of the Malabar Church in a body of elected representatives, and affiliating the Malabar Church with the Federation of South Indian Churches known as the S.I.U.C. Twenty-eight years later the Malabar District Council of the S.I.U.C. entered Union of Churches known as the Church of South India, and thus we, members of the Malabar Church, became part of the Diocese of North Malabar, C.S.I.

All through these changes there has been considerable progress in the Malabar Church. The ecclesiastical organization of which this Church is a part has grown more complex. The service rendered by the church through hospitals, schools and orphanages has become more consolidated. The ecclesiastical hierarchy guiding the church has become more dignified; the liturgy more variegated; and the rituals more solemn and impressive. But in spite of all these developments one disappointing fact remains. Conversions have practically come to a stop. Nowadays no non-Christian in Malabar dreams of leaving his community to join our church.

In the last century when it was so very difficult for a Hindu in Malabar to change his religion, why did so many conversions take place? At the present time when it is not difficult for a Hindu in Malabar to change his religion, why do they not take place at all?

In the last century people of Malabar had to put up with many social and economic injustices. Among Hindus the lower castes were groaning under the disabilities imposed upon them by the caste system. For the caste system had become harsher and more inhuman in Malabar than anywhere else in India. Malabar had also its agrarian problems. Almost all land in the district formed the private property of a few landlords. They leased out the larger part of their property to tenants whose condition was deplorable. Without security of tenure, rack-rented, and subjected to various exactions and indignities, their life was a life of object misery and servitude. No wonder, therefore, that the ideals of equality, brotherhood, and love preached by the Christian missionaries, and the kind treatment received by converts in the Christian community, as well as in the factories established by the missionaries, attracted many to the Christian fold.

Today conditions are different. The awakening which swept over Hindu Society throughout India has divested the caste system in Malabar of its worst features. Similarly land reforms carried out by the Government have altered beyond recognition the condition of cultivating tenants. In the matter of education, medical relief, and the care of orphans, moreover, the welfare measures adopted by the state make it unnecessary for poor non-Christians to seek shelter in the Christian community.

Of course, evangelistic campaigns are conducted by the Congregations in the Malabar Church according to schedule. The claim which Christianity puts forward to make bad men good, and to fill them with the Spirit of God has been brought to the notice of the non-Christian public. But unfortunately the non-Christian enquirer is not convinced. He finds that the life of many clergymen and laymen who hold high positions in the church belies the faith they profess, and the lofty principles they preach. We, members of the Malabar Church, do not now succeed in confronting non-Christians with the undeniable evidence of Christian character in the members of the community at large. It is time to make an honest study of the factors which contribute to the moral deterioration of our church.

Moreover the non-Christian finds that the Church is evading the most pressing moral issue facing the public in India today—question of condemning the socio-economic structure that denies justice and equality to the masses of this country, and keeps them in conditions of object poverty. In the last one hundred years and more, although the gospel of individual salvation has been preached by members of this church, no attempt has been made by the church, to support the movement which tries to bring about a change in the socio-economic structure of the country. What is worse,

(Continued on p. 8)

Enduring to the End

Mark. 13 : 13 'He that endureth to the end, the name shall be saved'.

There had been in the years past and in recent times men who had climbed up to the astronauts spending months in space crafts and landing on the moon and crossing Saturn, Scientists-men and women—making new inventions by their sustained researches, adventures exploring new areas. They all have one common quality—the quality of endurance. Their feats of endurance we do admire: Yet the endurance of the mountaineers and other adventures are for our admiration but certainly not for our imitation since most of us are unfitted for such tasks. Such endurance is no doubt a gift of God. Such endurance is only for the few. The endurance to which a Christian is called or Christian endurance, though a gift of God, is not restricted to adventures, artists or prophets. Christian endurance is by God's grace given to every Christian who has put his faith in the Lord Jesus.

When Jesus said to the disciples 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved', He was warning them about fiery tribulations, persecutions and martyrdoms. The prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled and the Christian Church underwent fierce persecution by the Roman Government. We render thanks to God for the endurance shown by the Christian people in Arunachal Pradesh in recent years in the midst of severe persecutions—beatings, burning of houses and Churches and murders—because of their faith in Christ. We thank God that in this part of our country we have been spared from such persecutions. Yet the need for endurance on our part persists. We carry a heavy load of inflation, shortages of essential commodities, restrictions, rationing and queues. The ideal of a new world hoped for in the International sphere, and the ideal of a welfare state hoped for in our country are receding and our hope for the return of a reasonably comfortable existence is being stranded on the sands of time.

Such a state of affairs is giving expression to strikes, agitations, strifes, burglaries and murders. The Christian witness in this context is Christian endurance. Moreover, the return of the reasonably comfortable living for our young people and children will be denied to them for at least the next fifty years to come and hence the special call for us parents and teachers and professors to train our dear children and young people in Christian endurance—instead—fastness, courage, devotion, faithfulness and sacrifice in daily life and work in the world.

How long shall we endure?

(1) 'He that endureth to the end' said our Lord: 'end' is an important word in the New Testament. The immediate meaning of the word is 'until death'. It corresponds to the Lord's injunction and promise to the Church at Smyrna—'Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life' (Rev. 2 : 10). Death came at all ages to the disciples and to hundred and

thousands of the faithful under the persecution by the Roman Government. Both young and old, men, women and children endured till their death. Arunachal Pradesh in the very recent past. 'It was at Smyrna one of the most famous Martyrdoms in the history of the Christendom took place—the martyr of Polycarp the Bishop of Smyrna. He was given a choice either to worship Caesar or be burned. Polycarp gave his immortal answer '86 years have I served Christ. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me?' As the flames ticked his body, he prayed the great prayer 'I thank Thee Father that thou hast graciously made me worthy of this hour that I may receive a portion of the cup of Christ'. Polycarp endured until death.

(2) 'To the end' may mean until the Second Coming of Christ, when tribulation and persecution will end. 'Second Coming' because it is an essential Christian belief, is referred to in the order of the Last supper, five times. God's people by their endurance hand on the torch of faith and faithfulness to the next generation. The parents, by their endurance hand on the torch of faith and faithfulness to their children. Teachers to the students. This handing on will go on till the coming of the Lord in glory and power. It is to be endurance under persecution or endurance under difficult conditions of life and work or endurance under opposition to the Christian activities. Our faith and faithfulness are not taught but caught by our children.

(3) to the end—till God's purposes for your life and my life are fulfilled. It is our belief that the Lord is working out His purpose of Salvation and has called every one of us to share in this purpose. His purpose for the world is being worked out as His purposes for our lives are fulfilled in our daily life and occupation. The captain of our Salvation endured the cross and said 'It is finished' (It is perfected). 'I glorify Thee having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do'.

Endure to the end—until death

—until the Second Coming of Christ
—until God's purposes are fulfilled in our lives.

To say it briefly, Christian life is not a momentary decision for Christ, but a life-long faithfulness to Him.

How is this possible? Are we equal to the Lord? In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the author speaks of Moses, who at the call of God heard his back of the luxury and comfort of the King's palace and for the treasures of Egypt (Heb. 11 : 24-27) to become a leader of a disorderly race of troublesome runaway slaves. The author wrote of Moses, 'We endure seeing Him, who is invisible'. That was for Moses the secret of his endurance.

A Christian is not as lonely as he seems. A cloud of witnesses surrounds him, saints and Martyrs cheer him. Best of all, as he goes enduring, he sees the 'Captain of our Salvation'. He goes enduring 'looking into Jesus'. This is the secret of Christian endurance.

We are called to endurance in Christian life and service, to Christian witness in the form of Christian endurance in the context of the present conditions of our country.

(Continued on page 19)

[AUGUST 1971]

Young Christian Dancer's Arangetram

Reflections on a fine performance

'Bharathanatyam requires devotion, discipline, talent and all three are found in her', said Justice S. Mohan when felicitating fourteen year old Sujatha Devadoss on her 'exquisite and superb performance' and 'very fine exposition of the ancient art of Tamilnadu'. Justice Mohan, who was present throughout Sujatha's arangetram before a large and appreciative audience in the Museum Theatre, Madras, on the 26th June 1980, also said that her prayer in *Alaripu*, 'O Lord, let me blossom' was answered by the devotion she showed in *Jathiswaram*, the dedication she displayed in *Sabdam* and the blessings she evoked in *Varnam*. From the opening *Alaripu* to the closing *Thillana*, Sujatha displayed a graceful versatility and charm of movement and expression which made the arangetram of this promising young artiste a memorable occasion. The costumes and the jewellery were in good taste and the lighting just right.

Tributes were also paid to her guru, Natakalamani S. K. Kameswaram, a disciple of Ramaiah Pillai and Mahadeva Pillai, who has taught Bharathanatyam for thirty years. His wife, Nathyathilagam Saroja Kameswaram, is a reputed dancer who teaches Bharathanatyam in the Rosary Matriculation School where Sujatha is a pupil. Together they have succeeded in bringing Sujatha to a very commendable level of proficiency.

Sujatha is a member of the Youth Group of the CSI Church of St. Thomas in San Thome so that it was fitting that the performance began with a prayer appropriate to the occasion by Rev. Desmond Francis, the minister where her family worships.

Miss Lily Muthayya, Principal of the Rosary Matriculation School, who presided, set the audience thinking with her frank remarks as a seasoned educationist. 'I have been noticing', she said 'a growing prejudice in the Christian community against Bharathanatyam. I sometimes feel that this is being encouraged by a few people who are unfortunately confusing religion and culture. We Indians are proud of our rich cultural heritage and we can all share in this irrespective of our different religious background. The finest way to enjoy the magnificence of performing arts like Bharathanatyam is to perform it oneself'. She expressed regret that 'such prejudices have made some Christian parents deny this joy to their children...'. As I listened to Miss Muthayya I recalled the pioneering days when the girls of Vidyodaya had an annual dance performance in the Museum Theatre. There was a great deal more prejudice against dancing in those days among Protestants (the Catholics have usually shown a more liberal attitude). But times have changed though some prejudice still lingers on which is worth examining.

One form of prejudice has its roots in the old 19th century missionary aversion to Hindu culture as 'heathen' and 'pagan'. Most Western mission boards have outlived this old bias and have been willing to sponsor developments seeking forms of integration with Indian culture through the visual, plastic and performing arts from painting to architecture and from music to dance. But old feelings of fear and insecurity that the Gospel witness and the sense of Christian identity may be lost still prevail in some circles. While it is not always easy to demarcate what is religious and what is cultural in the Indian heritage, what is a religious experience for a Hindu can be enjoyed as a cultural experience by a Christian. But we may even go deeper and see it as an exploration of Indian spirituality for the enriching of our Christian religious and cultural life. The ultimate object of encouraging our youth to undergo the training and discipline (*sadhana*) involved in our performing arts is not to weaken but to enhance their *bhakti* towards the Lord Jesus Christ expressed in ways that are part of our country's spiritual lore.

And such an approach is not irrelevant to our Biblical faith. Last year there was a Conference in Jerusalem on 'Dance in the Bible' Miriam danced to celebrate the exodus from Egypt, the prophets danced, and David, the poet king, danced before the Ark of the Lord. Today the charismatic movements within the Christian churches are recovering that sense of the body's rapture in the joy of worship. I have seen a film of Congolese nuns dancing at the Eucharist with devotion. I believe Indian Christians also can make a creative contribution to our understanding of Christian Worship through the Indian heritage of the performing arts.

The other point of view which is expressed sometimes is that we should prefer Indian folk dance and music to the Classical forms because the classical is elitist and the folk is closer to the people. With the dominant mood of liberation theology now in vogue, it is also argued that the social concerns of Christianity can be expressed better through the folk rather than the classical dance. It is inexpensive, does not need much by way of stage props and lighting, and can be performed in the streets or in open spaces.

While I agree with some of these points, I fear this type of thinking continues to reflect another old 'missionary' attitude that involvement in any form of art is useful only to the extent to which it is a helpful means of communication in the preaching and teaching mission of the Church. I do not deny the importance of using relevant and meaningful cultural forms for the projection of the Gospel. But the value of art surely goes beyond its significance for missionary and evangelistic communication. All art and artistic creation is ultimately rooted for us in the Christian understanding of the doctrine of Creation and the nature of Man. God the Creator has created man with the ability to create and artistic creation is one of the ways by which Man acknowledges the source of all creation. We worship God and hymn His creation as the source of all beauty through our artistic and creative activities with an awareness of His cosmic powers at work within the universe and within us. In this sense, art is also a form of liberation because 'aesthetic expression is a basic human need' and it 'expresses the convictions and commitments of Man'.

'To dismiss the highest achievements of art called classical as 'elitist' seems to me to be a curious attempt to sound more revolutionary than even the Marxists. Did the Russian revolutionaries destroy the Bolshoi Theatre and banish ballet as bourgeois and elitist? On the contrary, they had the good sense to see that the people who had been deprived of such a lovely classical art must have the right to the enjoyments of the highest forms of culture. Blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God. The poor have been starved of both bread and culture and have an equal right to both which are denied to them in societies based on caste and class.

After this digression—or—reflection—on Sujatha's performance, let me return to the scene in the Museum Theatre crowded with her relatives, friends, teachers (including many nuns) and well wishers. Beginning with Sri Jayaraj who welcomed the audience, all who spoke could not but refer to Sujatha's parents—Mahema and Manohar Devadoss—for whom the arangetram was a brave dream fulfilled. Both Mahema and Manohar are artistically gifted. Manohar's pen and ink drawings (especially of old churches in Goa) are remarkable for their fine detail. It was moving to listen to Mahema's clear explanation of each dance seated in a wheel chair and to see Manohar showing signs of his failing eyesight. Both Mahema and Manohar represent profiles in courage—undaunted, undefeated spirits with a zest for art and life.

As I left the Theatre with a happy heart and a dancing spirit, many thoughts and dreams filled my mind, and visions that have haunted me since the days of my youth. When will the Church and the Christian community in India fully awaken to the tremendous value of our cultural heritage and begin to delight in it? It is true that the dominant image we need in India today is the Servant Image of the Church in the midst of the poverty we see everywhere. But let us not confuse art and culture with ostentation, luxury, vulgarity and cheap displays of wealth which widen the gulf between the rich and the poor.

Miss Muthayya's concluding remarks were: 'I am glad Mahema and Manohar have chosen to encourage Sujatha to grow in this art. I sincerely hope that this arangetram will not be the end of a period of accomplishment but that Sujatha will continue to dance and also lead other Christian girls to this glorious art'. Sujatha is fortunate to have parents who enabled her to be trained and to have an arangetram. We need to discover more talent even among those who cannot afford to study in a school of dance and enable such girls to embark upon a similar career.

Sujatha is still a girl full of vitality and youthful charm. We trust Miss Muthayya's hopes for her will be fulfilled as she grows up by not only continuing to dance but also by becoming a choreographer who can utilize her talent for depicting Christian themes through her art. We need a body of young and creative people trained in this expressive and sensitive art who can make both the life and message of Jesus Christ a cultural and spiritual experience that can be shared with joy by all the people of our country.

CHANDRAN DEVANESEN

Protestant Church—(Continued from page 5)

in the church itself we are sustaining a socio-economic structure not different from what stands condemned outside. It is well-known that the teaching of rights for all men has been spread abroad by Christianity more than by any other force. Yet most of the clergymen still swear by the old exploiting system. They still uphold the view that God ordained the different ranks in wealth and position around us; that the poor and needy must be content with their lot and submit to their betters, so that they may be rewarded in a future world. The sooner our clergymen change their attitude towards those who are in social and economic servitude, the better for our church. Besides, the present oppressive socio-economic structure of the church has to be replaced by something more in conformity with our Master's teaching, and with the practice of the early Apostolic Church.

In these circumstances it is no wonder that the Malabar Church has lost the credibility it enjoyed at the start. Let us, as members of the Malabar Church, therefore listen to the warning which Queen Esther the Old Testament heard, when the Jews of the Persian Empire were threatened with destruction: 'you keep silence at such a time as this, and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's house will perish'.

E. J. EDONAL

Enduring to the End—(Continued from page 6)

The Lord has called us to endurance until the end because the Christian life is a life-long faithfulnes to Christ.

The secret of Christian's endurance lies in 'seeing the invisible', 'looking unto Jesus', who endured the cross for our salvation.

'He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved'.

O God our Heavenly father, we render thanks to Thee for Thy call to us as Thy children, servants and disciples. Grant us Thy Grace that we may live and work in several stations in life, in life-long faithfulness to Thee, enduring to the end looking unto Jesus, the Captain of our Salvation. For the glory of Thy great name. Amen.

BISHOP GEORGE DEVADOS

WANTED

The Institute is planning to conduct a study 'The Factors that give stability to the Indian Family in the midst of Social Change'. Women with a graduate qualification and some research experience may apply for the post of a Research Associate who carries a fellowship of Rs. 500 per month for a period of one year.

Please apply within 10 days giving full particulars.

The Director
Institute for Development Education
1 Anasuya Avenue
Kilpauk
Madras-600 010.

Good News to the Poor

The Poor and the Rich and the Coming of the Kingdom

1. The Kingdom of God which has been inaugurated in Jesus Christ brings justice, love, peace, joy and freedom from the grasp of principalities and powers, those denomic forces which place human institutions and human lives in bondage and infiltrate their very textures. God's judgement is revealed as an overturning of the norms, values and structures of this world. In the perspective of the Kingdom, God has preference for the poor.

Jesus announced at the beginning of his ministry, drawing upon the Word given to the prophet Isaiah, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...' (Lk. 4:18). This announcement was not new, because God had shown his preference for the poor throughout the history of Israel. When Israel was a slave in Egypt, God sent Moses to lead the people out to the land which he had promised, where they established a society according to God's revelation given through Moses, a society in which all were to share equally. After they had come into the land, God required them to remember that they had once been slaves. Therefore, they should care for the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner within their gates, their debtors, their children, their servants and even their animals (Deut. 5:13-15; 15:1-18). Time and again the prophets had to remind Israel of the need to stand for the poor and oppressed and to work for God's justice.

In Jesus God identified with the poor and oppressed by sending his Son to live and serve as a Galilean speaking directly to the common people; promising to bless those who met the needs of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner; and finally sharing death on a cross as a political offender. The good news handed on to the Church is that God's grace was in Jesus Christ, who 'though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich' (2 Cor. 8:9)...

3. The good news to the rich confirms what Jesus proclaims as the Gospel for the poor by calling the rich to trust in God and his abundant mercy. It is a call to repentance which means:

- to renounce the security taken from wealth and material possessions, which is, in fact, idolatry;
- to give up the exploiting power, which is the demonic feature of wealth; and
- to turn away from indifference and enmity over against the poor to solidarity with the oppressed.

4. The coming of the Kingdom as hope for the poor is thus a time of judgement for the rich. In the light of this judgement and hope, all human beings are shown to have been made less than human. The very identification of people as either rich or poor is now seen to be a symptom of this dehumanization. The poor who have been sinned against are rendered less human by being deprived. The rich are rendered less human by the sinful act of depriving others.

The judgement of God thus comes as a verdict in favour of the poor. This verdict enables the poor to struggle to overthrow the powers that bind them, which will then release the rich from the necessity to dominate. Once this has happened it is possible for both the humbled rich and the poor to become human and capable of response to the challenge of the Kingdom.

To the poor this challenge means the profound assurance that God is with them and for them. To the rich it means a profound repentance and renunciation. To all who yearn for justice and forgiveness Jesus Christ offers discipleship and the demand of service. But he offers this in the assurance of victory and the power of sharing in his risen life. As the Kingdom in its fullness is solely the gift of God himself, any human achievement in history can only be approximate and relative to the ultimate goal—the promised new heaven and new earth in which justice abides. Yet this Kingdom is the inspiration and constant challenge in all our struggles...

Who Are the Poor Today?

5...

Part of our difficulty in answering the question, 'Who are the poor today?' Comes from the fact that, although we live on the same globe, we come from different situations and are speaking of different realities which, although clearly related to each other, have quite different characteristics (context). Part of our difficulty comes from the fact that, although we serve a common Lord and share a common faith, we read the Scriptures in different ways and emphasize different aspects of our understanding of the Kingdom of God (content). We have struggled long with this question, and hope that further prayer and study and engagement in mission will bring us closer together...

6...

Although at times we have been tempted to contrast 'material' poverty and 'spiritual' poverty, we have found that to be an inadequate way to understand the situation. Humanity has been created by God as a 'living soul', and we are convinced that lack of food

and shelter and clothing produces anguish and misery, while lack of identity and love and fulfilment can make even the most affluent circumstances unbearable. The Gospel of the Kingdom is addressed to whole people in all of their life relationships. God is working for the total liberation of the whole of human life—indeed, for the redemption of the cosmos...

...

8. Although we have identified the poor in different contexts, we share a common conviction that God intends for all humanity to have both enough of material and cultural riches (the necessities of life), and to have both a personal and a social state of well-being. We feel that this is what our Lord meant when he said, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10) (fullness of life). They are to have life and to share in his life...

The Churches and the Poor

17. As we look at the churches in the world today, we find some places where a new era of evangelization is dawning, and the poor are proclaiming the good news; we find other places where the churches understand the situation of the poor and have begun to witness in ways that are good news. Some of the stories we have repeated above show the possibilities for a witness with and on behalf of the poor. The base communities in Latin America are churches of the poor that have been willing to share in their poverty and oppression, so that they can struggle to reach a just society and the end of exploitation. Some local churches and Church organizations have been willing to redistribute their wealth for the benefit of the self-development of the poor. And some church leaders and denominational groups have been working to challenge the transnational corporations at their business meetings and their board rooms....

20. We wish to *recommend* the following to the member churches of the World Council of Churches:

- (a) *Become churches in solidarity with the struggles of the poor.*

The poor are already in mission to change their own situation. What is required from the churches is a missionary movement that supports what they have already begun, and that focuses on building evangelizing and witnessing communities of the poor that will discover and live our expressions of faith among the masses of the poor and oppressed.

The churches will need to surrender their attitudes of benevolence and charity by which they have condescended to the poor; in many cases this will mean a radical change in the institutional life of the missionary movement. The churches will also need to be ready to listen to the poor, so that they can hear the Gospel from the poor, as well as learn about the ways in which they have helped to make them poor...

- (b) *Join the struggle against the powers of exploitation and impoverishment*

Poverty, injustice and oppression will not voluntarily release their grip on the lives of the poor. Therefore, it is necessary to enter actively into the struggle against these powers that create and maintain

the present situation. This will include the transnational corporations, governments and the churches themselves and their missionary organizations who they have joined in exploitation and impoverishment

- (c) *Establish a new relationship with the poor inside churches*

Many of the poor belong to the churches, only a few are able to have their voice heard or their influence felt. The new Testament churches were taught not to be respecters of persons but many churches today have built the structures of status, class sex and racial division right into their fellowship and organization. The churches should be open to the presence and voice of the poor in their own life. The structures of mission and church life still need to be changed to patterns of partnership and servanthood...

- (d) *Pray and work for the Kingdom of God*

When the churches emphasize their own life, their eyes are diverted from the Kingdom of God which was the heart of our Lord's message and represent the hope of the poor. To pray for the Kingdom will concentrate the Church's attention on that where God is trying to give to his whole creation, including humanity...

DOCUMENT

Ecumenical Press Service

The World.... (Continued from page 11)

function as the arm of the church to communicate the message. The print media has a role to play in promoting a mature understanding of the Christian Faith and Churches relation to the world. The following are suggestions of the way in which the publishing houses can get co-operation of the churches.

(1) *Literature Week*: With the help of the Heads of Churches, one Sunday could be declared as Literature Sunday and the following week could be celebrated as Literature Week, when an intensive campaign will be arranged to distribute Christian literature in parishes. This is being done in Kerala by C.L.S. and negotiations are going on for introducing the practice in the other Southern States.

(2) *Congregational Commitment to Reading*: This may be undertaken with the co-operation of the clergy who will introduce new books to their congregations and conduct discussion groups to study them so as to enable congregations to realize that they are a community of communicators.

Book Exhibitions arranged regularly at various churches and institutions will be fruitful in making congregations interested in reading good books. We realize that for an effective implementation of this project more mobility will be required on our part.

T. DAYANANDAN FRANCIS

The World of the Communication Worker from the Point of View of Literature Worker

The Indian Scene :

India is the third largest publisher of books in the English language. In English alone about eight thousand titles are published every year. Still more titles are published in the Indian languages. It is true that Indian publishing has made striking progress over the past two decades or so, particularly in terms of output, production, values, quality, range and variety. However, the publishing industry has almost come to a stand-still in recent months. Owing to the non-release of Government's Library grants to Universities the booksellers are not able to do good business. Amrik Singh, a leading educationalist writing in March 1980 in *Times of India* about the crisis in Indian publishing went to the extent of saying that 'unless one is being an alarmist, it would not be far wrong to say that by the summer of 1980, the Indian book industry would virtually grind down to a halt.'

Many factors led to this unsettled state of affairs in publishing trade. The cost of paper and printing have gone up to 100%, while the distribution techniques and sales machinery have not improved to any remarkable degree. There has been much indifference to publicity also.

The Plight of the Christian Publisher and Bookseller :

While the problems faced by their secular colleagues are common to the Christian publishers and booksellers, there are certain other problems which are peculiar to them. Mention may be made of some of them :

1. Most of us do business as charitable Christian Organisations without strictly conforming to the norms and conventions of book trade.
2. We are not able to predict the scope and sales possibilities of a new book.
3. Since we seek to satisfy the needs of various groups of Christian customers, we are tempted to be flexible in our policy of publishing books that will provoke theological discussion.
4. We depend on subsidies for publishing some books.

New Directions :

(a) *Publications on Social Issues* : In spite of the above-mentioned problems, as Christian publishers we are called to move forward seeking possibilities for serving the people. We are convinced more than ever before that our publications should in most cases be small in size and within the easy reach of common man. They have to be informative and instructive by dealing with relevant themes and burning issues of the day such as violation of human rights, exploitation of the rural poor,

corruption and the like. A new series of C.L.S. booklets in English and Tamil entitled Face to Face is prepared by people involved in social change programmes. An attempt is already made in Malayalam with the publishing of booklets of 50 to 80 pages priced at one rupee. Some of the topics dealt in them include Education for Liberation, Growth of Population and Development, Health Care and Development. We need to give more attention to publishing in the regional languages, the kind of books C.L.S. publishes for CISRS and the Institute for Development Education.

(b) *Joint Publications and Multi-Lingual Publications* : The joint publication scheme helps two or more publishers to work in close collaboration in bringing out books of common interest. The total cost of the book as well as distribution responsibilities will be equally shared by publishing partners.

Multi-Lingual Publishing Project envisages the publication of the same manuscript simultaneously in different Indian languages. The publishers who co-operate in this project are expected to pool together their manuscripts. Five or six manuscripts may be published within the first two years. These will be translated into various languages from a common English script for the use of the co-operating publishing agencies. The cover design and inside illustrations printed in one place will be distributed to the co-operating agencies. The institution of a revolving fund will be necessary to meet the initial expenses during the first two years. From the third year, the co-operating agencies should start to pay the cost of materials supplied to them during the previous years.

Intermedia Co-operation :

By co-ordinating their programmes, the print media and the electronic media can be mutually benefited. A concerted effort may thus be made to communicate the message. Quite a lot of material used by the electronic media can be adopted for the use of print media and the distribution of the latter can be made effective with the help of the former, besides providing some resource material. Such co-ordination is possible with social communication media also.

Co-operation between the media can be extended to the field of training writers. Such training will be realistic and relevant to the situation. This may be attempted in a small scale at the regional level by the media centres.

Co-operation of the Churches :

The communication media should make maximum effort to get the co-operation of the churches as they

(Continued on page 10)

Letters to the Editor

15th June 1980

Sir,

Following are some reflections on our Church, which I hope can find space in our Magazine. They are born out of deep concern over some observations. And what is happening here is not confined to our area only I believe, unfortunately.....

Whither our C.S.I.?

In May 1980 a special meeting of the Diocesan Council of the Karnataka Northern Diocese was held to decide on a panel of names out of which a new Bishop should be chosen. Before and during this meeting many participants demonstrated the great need that a thinking should set in our Church on one fundamental question. This fundamental question which we all have to ask ourselves may be put as follows: 'Is our Church more or less something in the line of a political party—or ought it to be something different, a community of the followers of Jesus Christ?' Because, if it is the latter, then, to my understanding of the Bible, the picture will be quite different.

If the first case holds true, then of course we must be prepared to find all sorts of things happening within our Church as we can find also in political parties. There will be canvassing, manouvering, hatching out of arrangements to outwit the other contenders, the other party. Promises for posts will be made to supporters. Even money will play a role. How much did it play a role in the recent Central—and State elections!! More money unfortunately still gives more influence and power over a certain section of people.

Now, to tell the truth, many of us in this area can witness to have observed such things happening also during preparations for the election to the panel of Bishopric. But, does all this conform to, harmonise with the spirit of the Bible, with the way Jesus was living, with what he was doing, what he was teaching? 'The greatest among you must be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled' (Matt. 23: 11). 'For, the least among you all—he is the greatest' (Luk. 9: 48). Let us also remember how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples on an important occasion. How humble he was, our Lord! He came into this world to serve and not to be served!

Now, if somebody strives openly and so fervently after the post of a Bishop, why does he do it? Actually, if one observes clearly, the ministry of a Bishop is a

big burden, many responsibilities he has to shoulder. How difficult it must be e.g. to try and bring all different groups within the Church into harmony, and bring to an end all the infighting between various factions, not to mention all the court cases going on since years! I as an ordinary Church member always feel sorry, when I am reminded of such developments. How much more must a Bishop be distressed in whose hands it is laid to quite some extent to try and get the Church out of such developments!

How often will sorrow and despair, disappointment be his companion?! Therefore, how can someone canvass for the post of a Bishop? We can only do so if our eyes are kept blind, if we do not see the picture of a Bishop, how Jesus would like him to be. If we canvass for this ministry, is it not because we do not see the other side of it, the honour it may also contain? Or do we say in our mind that we can control, dominate others by holding such an office? But can we imagine Jesus doing such things or accepting things amongst his disciples? Therefore, if canvassing and similar political practices are observed, should not this not automatically lead to the prevention of candidates from becoming Bishop—or any other Church elder?

Then, how should a Bishop be found without canvassing? The good shepherd who will have to lead all various sheep of his diocese, the white and the black, the brown and the multicoloured, the tame and the wild who always tend to break out and get lost, this shepherd should he not somehow emerge under prayer, the minds of all responsible for the election by way of his character, his work so far done in the ministry to the Church, the way of his life? In this connection I am reminded of the way the Catholic Church chooses a new Pope: in seclusion, under prayer. Of course, there will have to be a coming together, discussion etc. But all discussions would and should not be under the influence of individuals who endeavour to get such a post. Anyone who shows up such aspirations will automatically disqualify himself by the common understanding of all.

The way things went this time in our Diocese will surely not have found the acceptance of Jesus Christ if he walked amongst us at this time. But there were many found who felt this way and were much disappointed. This is a great hope! If these are listened to, surely a better way to select our Church elders up to the Bishop will be found!

J. STAEHEL

[AUGUST 1980]

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
IN INDIA

Christian Council Lodge,
Nagpur, M. S. 440 001.

R/C—554

July 12, 1980.

To

The Members of the NCCI
and
Related Agencies

Dear Friend,

DAY OF PRAYER FOR INDIA
Sunday, August 17, 1980

For the past several years we have been appealing to the members of the NCCI and its related agencies to observe the Day of Prayer For India on the Sunday nearest to August 15th—Our Independence Day.

Accordingly for this year we request and urge you to observe the Day of Prayer For India on Sunday, August 17th, 1980. The law and order situation in the country is deteriorating and moral degeneration is on the increase; oppression of the poor and the weak, arson, loot and violence, and affront to the dignity and humiliation of the personhood of women are fast becoming a part of our normal life. We must therefore pray that the Lord may incline our hearts to repentance and to seek his forgiveness. The following prayers may be used in the Sunday service.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Father in heaven, we give you thanks for life, and the experiences life brings us. We thank you for our joys, sorrows, trials, failures and triumphs. Above all we thank you for the hope we have in Christ that we shall find fulfilment in Him.

We praise you for our country, its beauty, the riches it has for us and the gifts it showers on us. We thank you for our peoples, the gift of languages we speak, the variety of races we have, the cultural heritage we cherish and the latent possibilities there are for our country to be great. Grant that we accept these gifts with thankfulness, and use them for the good of the human race and to bring glory to you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

We remember O Lord, our land and our nation before you. In shame and humility we confess that we are a hopelessly divided people, ruthlessly selfish, arrogant and conceited. We are living among the tombs of racial discrimination, regionalism with its attending vices, class consciousness and caste prejudices. We are succumbing more and more to our carnal tendencies giving vent to lewdness. We are prone to despise rather than to love. Wrenching and hoarding appeal to us and we scoff at giving and sharing. We are suffocating goodness, beauty and truth, and are rushing down the precipice of ruin and destruction.

AUGUST 1980]

Lord, have mercy on us miserable offenders, forgive our sins, renew and reclothe us with goodness, beauty, and truth, and change us into instruments for the building of your kingdom. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

Prayer for the Reawakening of the Country

Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high ;
Where knowledge is free ;
Where the world has not been broken up
into fragments by narrow domestic walls ;
Where words come out from the depth of truth ;
Where tireless striving stretches its arm
towards perfection ;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit ;
Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever widening thought and action ;
Into that heaven of freedom, my father,
Let my country awake.

Amen.

Rabhindranath Tagore

On behalf of the Officers of the Council, my colleagues at the Secretariat and members of the Executive Committee, I request you please to make all efforts to observe the Day Of Prayer For India widely.

Yours in Christ,
M.A.Z. ROLSTON,
General Secretary.

U.S. DAY OF PRAYER—August 28th 1980

The President of the United Bible Societies (UBS) which is the World fellowship of 98 National Bible Societies spread out in 160 countries and territories, has issued an appeal to all Christians and Churches around the world to observe August 28th as the UBS Day of Prayer. In the second half of September the UBS council will meet in Chiang Mai in Thailand and plan for the meaningful and effective distribution of scriptures in the next decade, in no less than 1683 languages throughout the world.

The General Secretary of the Bible Society of India is making available a suggested 'Order of Service' for use on that day, in English and in various Indian languages, through the eleven Auxiliary centres. May we all pray in solidarity with millions of fellow Christians around the world 'that the Holy Spirit of God will bless and give wings to His word, open to all'.

—Reported by REV. M. AZARIAH,
Secretary,
Bible Society, Madras-3.

News from the Dioceses

GURUKUL CELEBRATES 450th ANNIVERSARY OF AUGSBURG CONFESSION

On 24-25 June, the very dates on which the Augsburg Confession was presented in 1530, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Madras, conducted an Ecumenical Seminar on the Augsburg Confession. The purpose of the seminar was critically to evaluate the Augsburg Confession in the Indian context. The Confession of faith originates in a time and culture far removed from contemporary India, so the seminar sought to find its contemporary relevance for life and mission in India.

Four ecumenical perspectives were brought on the single theme 'The Relevance of the Theology of the Augsburg Confession to the Indian Context'. The emphasis throughout the presentations and discussions was on *the theological approach and content of the Confession*, not on its formulations of doctrine. Its positive approach, its assumption of basic Christian unity, its maintenance of historical continuity in doctrine, its relativisation of all ecclesiastical customs and traditions, were some of the points accepted as valid approaches for all churches today in framing a relevant Confession of faith.

Dr. C. L. Furtado, the presenter from the ecumenical perspective, suggested that the Augsburg Confession be used as *a model for framing an indigenous theology*. The Reformation was a liberation and indigenisation movement in 16th century Germany which offers useful guidelines for the Indian church today in its contemporary task. If we absolutize such a historical confession of faith, we turn the liberating Gospel into a new law. Fr. Paul Puthanangady from the Roman Catholic perspective also emphasized that our contemporary study and use of the Augsburg Confession must be future-oriented. We are to be inspired and guided for our contemporary task of confession in a multireligious, liberation-minded Indian context.

Sharply contrasting evaluations of the theology of the Augsburg Confession were offered by the Lutheran and Orthodox presentors, Dr. H. Kloss and Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios respectively. Dr. Kloss emphasized how the central concern of the Augsburg Confession was the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. This doctrine strikes at the heart of much religious thinking in India. In contrast, Metropolitan Osthathios pointed out the many areas in which he finds the Augsburg Confession at variance with true Christian tradition and with Indian methods of thought. He maintained that the whole Western Scholastic frame work of the Confession must be rethought if we are to attain the fullness of the Gospel and relevance to the Indian context.

The fifty-five pastors and church leaders in the Seminar were from many church traditions: Lutheran Church of South India, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Orthodox. They worked in study groups to find applications of these insights for local parish life. All agreed that the basic spirit and intent of the Augsburg Confession is one of great inspiration for us today in our ecumenical and mission callings. We are to *maintain the spirit of unity*, which is God-given. Yet, we are to also *maintain the truth of the Gospel* which is also God-revealed. Such ecumenical and mission application of the Augsburg Confession is to be carried into local congregation life.

Gurukul is planning to publish these papers immediately. The publication will also have articles on the historical background of the role of the Augsburg Confession in Lutheran-CSI unity discussions over the past thirty years. The Gurukul congregational study guide on the theology of the Augsburg Confession will also be included.

For further information please contact the Director, Gurukul, Madras-600 010, S. India.

27th June 1980

REV. HERBERT HOFFER

FREEDOM OF RELIGION (REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS) BILL, 1980

Whereas article 25 of the Constitution of India *inter alia*, provides that all persons are entitled freely not only to profess and practise any religion but also to propagate the same;

And whereas that right to propagate religion is incomplete without winning adherents to that religion;

And whereas this right has been unduly restricted by laws passed by some State Legislatures by creating new criminal offences;

And whereas experience has disclosed that the use of criminal law for this purpose has led to persecution and inhibition of legitimate religious activity;

And whereas the use of force or fraud is adequately dealt with by the existing provisions in the Indian Penal Code, 1860;

And whereas under entry 97 of List 1 of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India, Parliament is competent to legislate on the subject of religious freedom;

And whereas under entry 1 of List III of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India, Parliament

competent to legislate on the subject of criminal law and to prevent the misuse of criminal law for any purpose whatsoever ;

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Thirty-first year of the Republic of India as follows :

1. (i) This Act may be called the Freedom of Religion (Removal of Restrictions) Act, 1980.
2. It shall come into force at once.
3. It is hereby declared that every person shall have the right to persuade others to accept the tenets of any religion and to win adherents thereto.
4. The laws specified in the Schedule hereto annexed shall stand repealed.
5. Nothing in this Act shall affect any provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

Statement of Objects And Reasons :

Three pieces of local legislation mentioned in the Schedule to the Bill have created an intense feeling of dissatisfaction and persecution amongst the minorities, particularly the Christians. The Bill is intended to remove the misgivings of the Christian community of India.

TAMILNAD CHRISTIAN COUNCIL ECONOMIC LIFE COMMITTEE (TCCELC) MADRAS-600 032.

Exhibition-Cum-Consultation on Rural Appropriate Technology 21-6-1980

A day-long programme on Rural Appropriate Technology was organised at the TCCELC, programme Office compound on Saturday, the 21st of June, 1980. All the staff of the Economic Life Committee (ELC), members and representatives from various Churches, beneficiaries and other special invitees had gathered at 11.00 a.m. for the morning session which began with prayer by Rev. Dorairaj Peter, President, Tamilnad Christian Council (TCC).

Mr. Mithra J. Ebenezer, Director, TCCELC, welcomed the gathering and introduced the special invitees.

Two talks were given on Appropriate Technology, one by Dr. Job S. Ebenezer, Director, and other by Mr. A. R. Arulpragasam, Technical Officer, Rural Appropriate Technology Centre (RATC).

Dr. Job S. Ebenezer explained the working of various agricultural and other implements which could be operated by muscle power, wind power and solar energy. A bicycle adapted to operate machines by pedal power was the highlight of the morning talk. With the help of diagrams, Dr. Job S. Ebenezer explained the operation of some of the agricultural implements such as the thresher, winnower, groundnut decorticator, pumpset, and industrial equipment like the lathe by pedal power and also the working of the household appliances like the wet grinder, cooker and water heater. He underscored the need for free experimentation based on local conditions, needs and experiences.

Mr. Arulpragasam in his brief talk pointed out the use of animal power with greater efficiency to facilitate

the operation of village-based industries. Further research was indicated in this direction.

The Rev. Dorairaj Peter then declared open the Exhibition of implements developed by the Rural Appropriate Technology Centre (RATC). There were a wide and interesting range of articles and implements on display. Demonstration of farm implements operated by pedal power captured the attention and interest of most of the visitors especially from the rural areas.

Following lunch break, the participants re-assembled for a session of consultation led by Dr. R. S. Ernest, Chief Projects Officer, Inter Church Service Agency (ICSA) and Dr. S. Sathik, Professor of Production Engineering, Perarignar Anna University of Technology. Dr. Ernest presented a paper on Appropriate Technology in agriculture. He forcefully argued that large scale machanisation of agriculture as in the West was neither suitable nor necessary for our country. 'The need for our agriculture', Dr. Ernest said, 'is the use of simple agricultural tools and implements which can be operated with less power and human input with a view to keep the cost of cultivation of crops at as optimum level as possible.'

Dr. Sathik delivered an interesting lecture on the application of Appropriate Technology to Rural Industries and Engineering. He listed a number of areas where appropriate technology could be exploited for the development of rural economy. He assured the members of rendering all kinds of help and co-operation from the Perarignar Anna University of Technology in this regard.

There was a lively discussion that followed the talks given by the two speakers. Since the majority of the participants were from the farming background, their queries and comments were centred round the agricultural equipment and tools developed by the RATC. Many people felt that the thresher, the winnower and the pumpset operated by the pedal power should be made feasible for popular use. The groundnut decorticator would need further improvement.

The deliberations were wound up by Dr. Job Ebenezer who assured that the comments and criticisms of the members would be given serious consideration in his future research effort. He also assured the audience that similar consultations and exhibitions would be organised in different areas where the TCCELC—Rural Service Centres were operating so that the information and knowledge shared at this meeting might percolate to the general public in the villages. In conclusion, Dr. Ebenezer stressed the importance of human resources and expressed his strong conviction that care should be taken that in the application of appropriate technology there would not be any displacement of manpower creating unemployment. That, he warned, was not the purpose of Rural Appropriate Technology.

The consultation came to a close with a Vote of Thanks proposed by Mr. Jeevanesan, a representation of the farmers, and prayer and benediction by Rev. Joseph John, the founder of TCCELC.

T. S. SWAMYDASON
Convener, TCCELC

MITHRA J. EBENEZER
Director, TCCELC.

Ecumenism in India : Edited by Mathai Zachariah;
Published by I.S.P.C.K., Delhi, 1980. pp viii + 138.
Rs. 25.00.

This book is a collection of essays written by eminent theologians of India. It has been brought out in honour of the Rev. M. A. Thomas, the Founder-Director of the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield. The contribution of Rev. Thomas to the ecumenical movement is too well-known to need any elaborate comment. He has done much to the cause of ecumenism by converting an idea into a vigorous movement in the form and through the various action programmes of the Ecumenical Christian Centre. He is rightly hailed as the 'ecumenical evangelist'. The book is indeed a fitting tribute to 'the ecumenical spirit, ecumenical love and ecumenical urge of the Rev. M. A. Thomas.

The essays included in this small volume aim more at analytical interpretation of the meaning of ecumenism in the context of the Indian Church than a historical survey of the ecumenical movement in India. They critically evaluate the Christian response which ecumenism has evoked in the Indian Church in the recent past'. The last two essays deal with the special contribution made by the Ecumenical Christian Centre and the Rev. M. A. Thomas to the propagation of ecumenical message and the spread of the ecumenical movement.

The authors of the various essays in the book underline the fact that Christian ecumenism should not be understood narrowly in terms of Church Union only. They emphasize that while it is proper and necessary for Christian ecumenism to be concerned about the unity and mission of the Church in the world today, it should go beyond that and include within its scope the total renewal of the Church and its concern for man and his struggle to be human. They affirm that genuine Christian ecumenism should find its meaning and mission in the context of political, social, ideological and technological revolution through which contemporary man is struggling to realise his authentic humanity. With this understanding of the nature, meaning and scope of Christian ecumenism, the book comes as an exhortation to all Christian to become involved in the ecumenical movement which is directed towards the goal of unity if not only all Christians and Churches but unity of all men and the whole world. As summed up in the message, the central message of the book is: 'Ecumenism is essentially a cosmic vision. Ecumenism is hope in action—hope that the Church will be one, that the world will be one; hope that the obscurities of our life in this world will be clarified and its frustrations overcome when we see Jesus Christ as the hidden dynamism of history and the Church as his 'eucharistic' presence in the world'. In the words of Lucas Vischer it is 'a fellowship deeper than all division'.

While the essays are of great help to the reader in capturing the grand vision of ecumenical movement, they do not throw much light on the local and parish level expressions of ecumenism. Those who know Rev. Thomas's concern for the local Church and neighbourhood community would have appreciated the inclusion of one or two contributions relating to this dimension of ecumenism. This, however, does not diminish the value of the book.

DR. M. ABEL.

Queen Mary's School,
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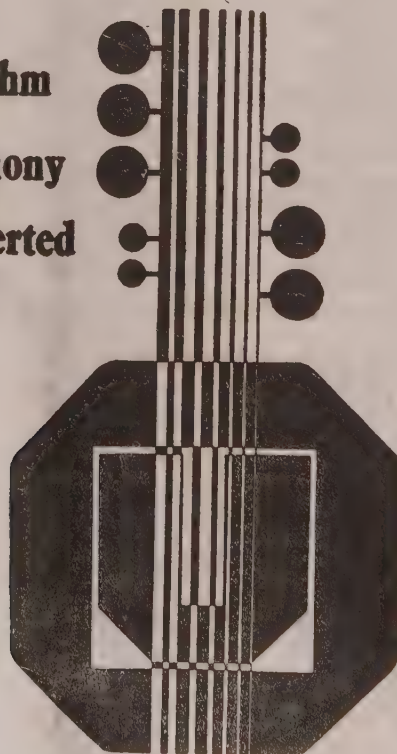
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